

## [Thomas Acey Brown]

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Folkstuff Range Lore

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Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas.

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### RANGE-LORE

"I was born in Rusk County in 1860," says Mr. Thomas Acey Brown. My father was a full-blooded Englishman and mother was Scotch Irish.

"I was about 17 years old when I left Rusk County,, looking for a ranch job. I meandered over into the Palo Pinto and Ranger section, where I worked for the old Slaughter outfit. Everybody knowed that Slaughter bunch all over the states. The old man was a Baptist preacher, C. C. Slaughter was a banker in Dallas and was worth over three million. Lum, another son, was the black sheep, did a little gambling and everything else that came his way. Bill and John were ranchmen, on a large scale. The whole 2 outfit owned a great part of Texas. They just kept right on, right on growing up with Texas. That's why they were so famous. I worked with that outfit for several years during round-up times.

"Old preacher Slaughter and Ross captured an Indian boy when he was just a little shaver; he had growed to be about 25 years old when I worked for them. This Indian boy was a mighty fine rider, did most all the breaking of Slaughter's horses. He never wanted to go back to his tribe after he was grown.

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"When I was up in Palo Pinto County, I heard about an Indian climbing over a high rail fence when a guard shot him, and he died standin' straight up, leanin' against that fence; then the settlers tied him to a horse's tail and dragged him into town. They all gathered around, skinned him, and made quirts out of his hide.

"Yes and I heard about them Indians a-skinning a white man alive and him a livin' over it too; don't know if it was so or not, I just heard it.

"I knowed Jessie and Frank James, Sam Bass's bunch, (Blackie) Frank Jackson, and Warren Jackson, they were all train robbers of the Texas Pacific. These robbers and Indians would get back in them Palo Pinto hills and nobody could get 'em out without puttin' hounds in after 'em.

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"The killin' of Sam Bass was all a plot, they didn't get him fair. Old Murphy plotted a way to catch him, went into Round Rock to get a shave and gave officers a signal when he passed by. The officers surrounded the bunch and killed Sam. Then Jackson took a shot at Murphy when he was in the barber chair, but didn't kill him.

"There was lots of wild people in this country when I came out here but they didn't get out much. These wasn't bad fellers; anyway we didn't think so then. They'd come out and do a little robbin' and give any poor person in need some money; they never killed unless they were forced to. Every one of them boys was drove to doin' what they done; ain't like the skunks now-a-days, hold you up for two-bits, then killed you for not havin' it. These here preachers! If I don't roast 'em when they come to my house a-tellin' us to pray. 'Pray, pray, don't forget to pray, brother! Just go to it boys but don't forget to pray when you got to the forks of the road.' Why, Clyde and Bonnie prayed every day-can't tell by that. These here meetin's where they get down and roll and then have to drag 'em out in the brush and fan 'em. Bah! Ain't no more to them than these doctors hum-buggin' around. Why, here I am 78 years old, takin' medicine for my kidneys and it ain't a-doin' me no good. I can't hold out

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to walk at all and I used to be as good 4 as a horse. I've slept in wet blankets too long I guess, 'til I'm just dead now, still a-walkin' but I'm dead just the same. Sometimes I do take a tumble but just get up and keep a-goin'. I don't mean to fool with them doctors though. Oh! These doctors and preachers; it's a wonder to me anyone is a-livin' now-a-days. One will tell you, you are goin' to hell and the other quack a-givin' somethin' he doesn't know if it will kill or cure. Then they talk about the bad boys robbin' trains long ago. I know which I'm for.

"After I left the Palo Pinto Country, I went on down around Fort McKavett and the Brady section a-workin' for Dwight Benjamin. There were only two old boxed cabins at Fort McKavett at that time.

"A bunch of Indians came through them parts and killed several white men and just cleaned Brady of horses.

"An old man was goin' down the road in a wagon when three Indians a-walkin' and two on horseback went up and killed the old feller, cut his horses loose and took one of them; the other one got away and ran home. The family knew something had happened. The same horse ran home once before when Indians attacked the old man and he was saved that time. The Indians went on and made their next raid at Salt Gap, killing a Mexican and taking a bunch of horses from there. The soldiers from Fort Concho and Fort McKavett followed 5 but they were led further and further away from water until they were starved out. The old broken down horses were all they ever got back.

"There was plenty of trouble over that wire cuttin' business and nobody was ever supposed to know who done the cuttin'.

"They didn't have many ranches in them days, camps were scattered over the range and they tried to stretch a little wire around some of the land and make a ranch. It didn't do no good for a long time. This was the cause of the cattlemen and sheepmen's little fussin'. It

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didn't amount to much where I was, of course the cowmen would run the sheep off their range but they'd come right back since there wasn't no fences.

"Speakin' of stampedes, I never seen one happen with the cattle on home grounds. When they were on strange ground the least little noise would just scare the life out of 'em.

"I've rode some mighty bad horses in my days; never struck but a few I couldn't tame. I always tamed them before I rode 'em. These rodeo horses are not so bad. Four or five men get in the stall and go to throwin' saddle, ropes, and stuff all over them and get 'em scared to death before they bring 'em out. The boys used to say I could conjure them. Why, I've led a-many a-one right out of a lot when he had never 6 had as much as a halter on before. I pet him up a little, get right on and they never pitched a bit. These rodeo horses think they supposed to pitch and go right ahead and do it.

"I knowed Booger Red real well; I just lived across the mountain from him, when he lived on a little ranch out from San Angelo. He was makin' merry at Christmas time and bored a hole in a tree, filled it full of gun powder, then struck a match to it, and it blowed him up. That's why he was so ugly. He naturally was red headed and freckle faced, then when this powder black specked him and blowed both eyes side-ways, he sure was a booger. He was a mighty good rider when he was a boy and I guess he did get to be a real rider after he had so much practice in his shows. They say he had a boy that was about as good as he was.

"I went back to East Texas and got married when I was 37 years old, and settled down. I came back out here about 25 years ago and have stuck pretty close since."

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mr. Thomas Acey Brown, Tennyson, Texas, interviewed, February 1, 1938.